To: OW-OWOW-EVERYONE;OWOW Managers Group;OWOW ORISE;k.kallins@gmail.com[]; WOW Managers Group;OWOW ORISE;k.kallins@gmail.com[]; WOW ORISE;k.kallins@gmail.com[]; .kallins@gmail.com[]
Cc: []
From: CN=Antonio Bravo/OU=DC/O=USEPA/C=US
Sent: Tue 6/5/2012 5:42:28 PM
Subject: FYI Only: Water articles in the Press

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Alaskans comment on EPA's Bristol Bay mining study 06/05/2012 Post-Standard - Online NY

EPA Bristol Bay mining study gets support, criticism at hearing 06/05/2012 Anchorage Daily News - Online AK

Overflow turnout rips costly new Great Bay nitrogen rules at forum 06/05/2012 Union Leader - Online NH

'Red Tape' forum offered to businessmen in Manchester 06/05/2012 Union Leader - Online NH

12-year, $880M plan to restore Everglades unveiled 06/04/2012 Miami Herald - Online, The FL

BRISTOL BAY: 12 scientists picked to review EPA watershed assessment 06/04/2012 Greenwire

EPA Forms Advisory Board on Great Lakes Issues 06/04/2012 Wisconsin Ag Connection WI

EPA: N.H. field hearing to air grievances over new discharge regs 06/04/2012 Environment & Energy Daily DC

Is Indiana taking proper action against toxins in our waterways? 06/04/2012 Louisville Courier-Journal - Online KY

Oversight panel holds hearing on NH water rules 06/04/2012 Oregonian - Online, The OR

Saving water, preserving land 06/04/2012 San Antonio Express-News - Online TX
Suit to force Everglades cleansing appears near resolution 06/04/2012 Palm Beach Post - Online FL

Supporters of ban on treating waste water from fracking collect 700,000 signatures to back bill 06/04/2012 Asbury Park Press - Online NJ
The week ahead: urban heat and coal mining 06/04/2012 Louisville Courier-Journal - Online KY

News Headline: Alaskans comment on EPA's Bristol Bay mining study |

Outlet Full Name: Post-Standard - Online
News Text: ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Alaskans alternately thanked the Environmental Protection Agency or told its representatives to back off Monday night at a hearing on the federal agency's draft study of the effects of large-scale mining on the headwaters of Bristol Bay.

The study released last month was conducted at the request of a half dozen Alaska Native entities that asked the EPA to veto large-scale mining in the region because of its harmful effect on fish habitat, especially the salmon that return to freshwater rivers and streams to breed each year.

The draft study concluded that large-scale mining would have significant negative impacts on fish habitat even without a major problem such as the failure of a dam holding mine tailings. It added fuel to the bitter debate waged in the state over development of the Pebble prospect, which carries the potential of producing 80.6 billion pounds of copper, 107.4 million ounces of gold and 5.6 billion pounds of molybdenum, according to its owners.

The EPA study said the prospect's low-grade ore means a mine will be economic only if conducted over a large area, and therefore, a large amount of waste material will be produced.

Under section 404(c) of the federal Clean Water Act, the EPA can prohibit the use of an area as a disposal site for fill material even before a company applies for a permit if discharge will have unacceptable adverse effects on municipal water supplies, wildlife or fish, and even if other federal agencies gave their OK.

The so-called veto authority has been used sparingly over the decades, according to the agency. The hearing Monday was for testimony on the thoroughness of the study of the potential effects.

"What we're trying to do is make sure we get the science right," said EPA Region 10 chief Dennis McLerran.

At risk is habitat in the vast Bristol Bay fishery, which accounts for 46 percent of the world's wild sockeye salmon and an annual average commercial harvest between 1990 and 2010 of 27.5 million fish. That doesn't include the sport anglers who target salmon, trout and char, or the subsistence harvest of all the species.

Thomas Tilden, tribal chief for Dillingham and a commercial fisherman since 1965, said the study underestimates the importance of fish to the people of the region. It's not just salmon, he said, but species that never reach saltwater, such as grayling, pike, whitefish and suckers.

"Fish is who we are," he said. "That is our economy."

But others at the meeting said they resented the EPA presence as an overreach of federal authority and an attack on state sovereignty. The Pebble prospect is on state land designated for mineral exploration.

John Sturgeon of Anchorage said it was unfair of the EPA to thwart the state permitting process that would allow mine developers to explain how they could extract minerals without harming the watershed.

State Rep. Charisse Millett, R-Anchorage, said the EPA actions are precedent setting and would scare off potential investors in the state.

Abe Williams, president of Paug-Vik Corp., a Native shareholder corporation based in Naknek, which has land adjacent to the Pebble prospect, said mining represents jobs in villages that are losing residents. He called for a longer comment period on the study and a dialogue on the mine's effects.

"Do not extinguish Native people's opportunities through fear and emotion," he said.

Comments on the study will be accepted until July 23.

News Headline: EPA Bristol Bay mining study gets support, criticism at hearing |

Outlet Full Name: Anchorage Daily News - Online
News Text: Alaskans alternately thanked the Environmental Protection Agency or told its representatives to back off Monday night at an Anchorage hearing on the federal agency's draft study of the effects of large-scale mining at the headwaters of Bristol Bay.

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News Headline: Overflow turnout rips costly new Great Bay nitrogen rules at forum |

Outlet Full Name: Union Leader - Online
News Text: EXETER —Members of a congressional panel got an earful Monday as representatives from four New Hampshire communities complained about costly rules that would place strict limits on the amount of nitrogen discharged by wastewater treatment plants into the Great Bay estuary.

U.S. Reps. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., and Frank Guinta, R-N.H. — both members of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform — held a hearing at the Exeter Town Offices to gather local input on the controversial limits proposed by the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

The overflow crowd spilled out into the hallway, leaving many unable to find a seat in the meeting room.

Representatives from Dover, Portsmouth, Rochester and the Great Bay Municipal Coalition, which includes the three cities and Exeter and Newmarket, testified against the EPA's proposal to limit nitrogen released from wastewater treatment plants to 3 milligrams per liter. The EPAwants to restrict the amount of nitrogen, now at levels of about 20 to 30 milligrams per liter, because it argues that the pollution is significantly reducing eelgrass and oyster populations in the estuary.

The five municipalities say they're willing to take steps to cut down on nitrogen, but insist that dropping limits to 3 milligrams is too extreme and would cost nearly $600 million in plant upgrades to meet the requirement.

“While the Great Bay communities agree with the EPA that nitrogen reduction is a priority, EPA's approach to the issue appears to be extreme — with sweeping, all-or-nothing requirements that will create a major economic detriment to the area,” said Issa, committee chairman.

Rochester Mayor T.J. Jean testified that the proposed limits would have “severe financial impacts” on his city and that the proposed regulatory actions designed to protect Great Bay “are not based upon sound science and, if implemented, would do more than constitute a waste of scarce local resources. It would financially cripple our city, prevent us from attracting and maintaining our business base, and impose an unreasonable financial burden on our citizens. We are disappointed that (the) EPA would gamble away our future based on little more than guesswork.”

Jean urged the committee to launch an independent review of the EPA's actions.

The EPA has so far issued draft renewal permits for Dover, Exeter and Newmarket that call for the 3 milligrams per liter limit. Final permits for Exeter and Newmarket are expected to be issued later this summer with Dover's permit to follow.

The Great Bay Municipal Coalition has offered an alternative that proposes treatment plant upgrades that would reduce the nitrogen discharge limit to 8 milligrams per liter under an “adaptive management plan” that would save the municipalities $225 million and reduce nitrogen levels by 73 percent, according to Dean Peschel, an environmental consultant for Dover who testified on behalf of the city and the Great Bay Municipal Coalition.

“Our communities cannot afford to waste financial resources implementing solutions that are based on unsound science. Our technical experts have clearly shown that extreme reductions in nitrogen will not improve water clarity or remove the eelgrass impairments to the estuary. We need an open peer review of the science which includes input from the public to avoid a potentially massive waste of local resources,” Peschel said.

Calling Great Bay a “real jewel,” Curt Spalding, administrator of the EPA's New England Region, defended the agency's push for stricter limits, but said he realized the public investment to clean up Great Bay and insisted that the agency would work with municipalities to minimize costs.

He said the EPA's initial focus has been on the small number of sewage treatment plants that discharge the bulk of the nitrogen load. Dover, Exeter, Newmarket and Rochester account for 80 percent of the nitrogen released into Great Bay from treatment plants.

“Even without the new, nitrogen limits proposed for these communities, these treatment plants are long overdue for basic upgrades that will require significant capital investments. The total cost of the upgrade will include much more than nitrogen control, and will avoid more costly retrofits later,” Spalding said. “The EPA has gone to great lengths to ensure the public has had an opportunity to inform the permitting process. In both Exeter and Newmarket, we had lengthy public comment periods, granted extensions when requested, and held public hearings.”

Some 27 people who attended the hearing but weren't given a chance to speak, including four state representatives, signed a statement addressed to Guinta and the House committee opposing the Great Bay Municipal Coalition's approach.

“We instead support the approach of the town of Durham in working with EPA to find affordable and diverse ways to meet this challenge, rather than dodging it by attacking EPA and the peer-reviewed science,” state Reps. Judith Spang, D-Durham, and Phil Ginsburg, D-Durham, wrote in the statement.

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News Headline: 'Red Tape' forum offered to businessmen in Manchester |

Outlet Full Name: Union Leader - Online
News Text: U.S. Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., speaks at Rep. Frank Guinta's "Red Tape Forum" for small businesses in Manchester on Monday.

(DAVID LANE/UNION LEADER)

MANCHESTER — The new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Dodd-Frank financial oversight law, and other federal regulation were on the minds of businessmen at a “Red Tape” forum Monday.

“Our concern right now is all the new regulations that banks going to be required to comply with,” Christiana Thornton, president of N.H. Bankers Association said.

“I think you'll find that more and more bank employees are going to be spending more time trying to read through pages upon pages of new government regulations, time that they would have spent trying to work with small-business owners, individuals and communities,” she told the meeting convened by U.S. Rep. Frank Guinta, R-N.H.

Guinta was joined by U.S. Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and about three dozen business leaders at 36 deLux Restaurant, 36 Lowell St.

Speaking of Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Issa said, “We have no ability to hold them accountable under current law. They are self-funded and unfortunately, the roll between FDIC and Consumer Financial is one in which we may have an agency to agency problem much more than we thought.”

“You've got one group saying do what you need to do to stay in business; you're going to have another one that says do this for this group ... and it's one of our concerns is that they will be mandating activities, that although they may be good to do, they may be directly in conflict to the best interest of preserving your capital base for purposes of not being shut down.”

Issa and Guinta appeared at a session in Exeter earlier Monday over EPA limits on nitrogen discharge into Great Bay from wastewater treatment plants in Exeter, Portsmouth, Newmarket, Dover and Rochester.

Tax rates were also a topic of discussion.

Issa asked what trade-offs might be acceptable if there has to be compromise over the Bush tax cuts, which are set to expire in January.

“The rate on that last dollar of income is a bigger motivator for many job creators,” Joe Shean, president of R.P. Abrasives and Machine Inc., in Rochester, said.

“If you keep that low, even though there are other deductions that ... the job creator is more highly motivated ... the tax code is simpler and it's fairer,” he said.

Harry Shepler, founder and managing partner of the Shepler Financial Group LLC, was critical of Dodd-Frank. “I can't see any public purpose other than putting more power in the federal government,” he said. “I have to hire extra staff.”

Email dpaiste@unionleader.com

News Headline: 12-year, $880M plan to restore Everglades unveiled |

Outlet Full Name: Miami Herald - Online, The
News Text: WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. -- Nearly a quarter-century of fighting over the restoration of the ecologically fragile Everglades could be nearing an end.

A 12-year, $880 million blueprint to improve water quality was unveiled Monday by the South Florida Water Management District, the lead state agency on Everglades restoration.

It takes pieces of plans proposed last year by both the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the state Department of Environmental Protection, all an effort to settle lawsuits dating back to 1988.

The latest proposal would create five stormwater treatment areas covering 57,000 acres in an effort to filter phosphorous from the water.

News Headline: BRISTOL BAY: 12 scientists picked to review EPA watershed assessment |

Outlet Full Name: Greenwire
News Text: A U.S. EPA contractor has selected a dozen scientists with expertise in mining, water and Native Alaskans to review the agency's report on the potential impacts of large-scale mining in the southwestern part of the state, according to an announcement that will appear in tomorrow's Federal Register.

Contractor Versar Inc. evaluated 86 candidates collected during a previous comment period. EPA is now accepting feedback for three weeks on the questions and topics the group will discuss.

The 12 reviewers are scheduled to meet Aug. 7-9 at the Anchorage Convention Center. The first two days will be open to the public. EPA expects to have formal comments from the scientists two weeks later.

"EPA will evaluate public comments, and comments provided by the peer review panel to prepare a final draft of the [watershed] assessment,"EPA spokeswoman Hanady Kader said in a statement. "The EPA anticipates completing a final draft by the end of the calendar year."

In its draft report, EPA warned that a sprawling mine proposed for southwestern Alaska would likely pose a threat to waterways and a thriving salmon fishery (E&ENews PM, May 18). At issue is the potential Pebble LP gold and copper project, which could become one of the world's largest mines.

Pebble executives have complained about EPA using a hypothetical mine plan for its review, because Pebble has not submitted formal permitting documents. The topic is among the possible questions that peer reviewers will discuss: "Given the type and location of copper deposits in the watershed, was this hypothetical mine scenario realistic?"

The review team members and their areas of expertise and affiliations:

David Atkins, mining and hydrology, Watershed Environmental LLC, Orcutt, Calif.

Steve Buckley, mining and seismology, WHPacific Inc.

Courtney Carothers, indigenous Alaskan cultures, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

Dennis Dauble, fisheries biology and wildlife ecology, Washington State University.

Gordon Reeves, fisheries biology and aquatic biology, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Pacific Northwest Research Station.

Charles Slaughter, hydrology, University of Idaho.

John Stednick, hydrology and biogeochemistry, Colorado State University.

Roy Stein, fisheries and aquatic biology, Ohio State University.

William Stubblefield, aquatic biology and ecotoxicology, Oregon State University.

Dirk van Zyl, mining and biogeochemistry, University of British Columbia.

Phyllis Weber Scannell, aquatic ecology and ecotoxicology, Scannell Scientific Inc.

Paul Whitney, wildlife ecology and ecotoxicology.

EPA also is conducting public meetings around Alaska this week on its draft report (Greenwire, May 30). The agency is accepting comments on that document until July 23.

News Headline: EPA Forms Advisory Board on Great Lakes Issues |

Outlet Full Name: Wisconsin Ag Connection
News Text: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced the creation of an advisory board to support federal agencies with the implementation of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the updated Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

The new board, the federal government's first advisory committee on Great Lakes issues, will provide advice and recommendations to EPAAdministrator Lisa P. Jackson in her capacity as federal Interagency Task Force chair. EPA will consider candidates from a broad range of interests including environmental groups, businesses, agricultural groups, funders/foundations, environmental justice groups, youth groups, academia and state, local and tribal representatives as needed. Nominees will be solicited through a second Federal Register notice in the coming weeks. EPA anticipates that board will be established this summer.

"The health of the Great Lakes affects the health of millions of people. These waters also play a vital role in the historical, cultural, educational and economic progress of this region," said EPA Administrator and Task Force Chair Lisa P. Jackson. "As we work to set a new standard of care for these waters, it's important that we hear from experts and stakeholders who can strengthen our efforts. By providing insight from those who know these waters best, the Great Lakes Advisory Board will ensure the continued success of the work already underway, and help move us into the next phases of Great Lakes restoration and protection."

The Great Lakes provide more than 30 million Americans with drinking water and underpin a multi-billion dollar economy. In February 2009, President Obama proposed and Congress funded the GLRI, the largest investment in the Great Lakes in two decades.

The Interagency Task Force is made up of 16 federal agencies and departments.

News Headline: EPA: N.H. field hearing to air grievances over new discharge regs |

Outlet Full Name: Environment & Energy Daily
News Text: House Republicans will take their fight against red tape on the road Monday, with a trip to a small New Hampshire

town that faces stricter nitrogen limits for its sewage treatment plants.

The Oversight and Government Reform Committee hearing promises to bring some national attention to a local controversy -- a controversy that just happens to sit in the district of Republican Frank Guinta, an oversight panel member who is in a tight race against former Rep. Carol Shea-Porter, a Democrat who held the seat before losing to Guinta in 2010.

Guinta has been outspoken about the new limits EPA is poised to set for sewage treatment plants in communities that surround the Great Bay estuary. The facilities currently do not have numeric limits on how much nitrogen they discharge; EPA is set to issue permits that would allow 3 milligrams per liter.

That does not sit well with community leaders, who see it as cost-prohibitive for their treatment plants. T.J. Jean, the mayor of Rochester, said in prepared testimony that EPA's actions "would financially cripple our City, prevent us from attracting and maintaining our business base, and impose an unreasonable financial burden on our citizens."

The backlash parallels Republicans' ongoing assault on regulations -- particularly those from EPA -- that they say hinder job creation.

In a statement, Oversight Chairman Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) argued that the new limits would cost the communities around Great Bay more than $160 million in initial compliance costs, along with annual costs of $25 million. The panel's Republicans believe EPA should adopt a local proposal to set the limit at 8 milligrams per liter, which local officials say would cut the cost in half.

"EPA's proposal would impose extreme costs on the citizens of the Great Bay communities, despite a viable alternative, because the science underlying this stringent new standard is questionable," Issa said. "The EPA's approach is unrealistic and renders the communities unable to sustain their economic base."

Environmental groups say the new limits are necessary to protect Great Bay, where EPA has determined that nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus are choking out eelgrass vegetation. But so far, the only environmental experts on Monday's witness panel are those associated with the Great Bay Municipal Coalition, a group formed by the communities affected by the new permitting.

In their prepared testimony for Monday, the witnesses argue that the new limits on nitrogen will require all treatment plants to undergo expensive renovations or build new facilities. EPA, they say, did not provide enough public involvement.

John Hall, an environmental consultant hired by the coalition, also charges EPA with ignoring a report from the agency's Science Advisory Committee that found the regional office had not established a cause-and-effect relationship between increased nitrogen and decreased eelgrass.

But Region 1 Administrator Curt Spalding counters that not only has EPA "gone to great lengths" to include the public in the permitting process, the sewage treatment plants in question need major upgrades even without new nitrogen discharge limits.

"We are fully aware that it will take public investment to clean up Great Bay. We have indicated from the outset that we will be responsive to communities' concerns about cost," Spalding wrote, adding that his office is open to discussing a phased approach to the upgrades. "We are willing to work with communities to minimize the impact to rate payers."

Schedule: The hearing is today at 9 a.m. in the Exeter Town Office Building, 10 Front St., Exeter, N.H.

Witnesses: Rochester Mayor T.J. Jean; Dean Peschel of Peschel Consulting LLC; John Hall of Hall & Associates; Peter Rice, public works director for Portsmouth, N.H.; and EPA Region 1 Administrator Curt Spalding.

News Headline: Is Indiana taking proper action against toxins in our waterways? |

Outlet Full Name: Louisville Courier-Journal - Online
News Text: About a mile south of Lucas Oil Stadium in Downtown Indianapolis, Tony Chao stood fishing one recent morning on the bank of the White River.

A few feet behind his back, a sign warned not to wade into the water. Too much raw sewage in there. A sign to his left warned “not all fish are safe to eat.” Some have too many toxins in their meat.

When asked whether he actually eats what he catches, Chao, 55, gave a look that might best be described as “are you serious?”

Chao’s three fishing rods were propped up next to a pile of someone else’s discarded beer cans, sport-drink bottles and soggy carpet pieces.

Beyond the trash, across the river, a white cloud puffed up from a smokestack.

“I don’t think people eat the fish here,” Chao said.

And for good reason.

This stretch of the White River — like so many other Hoosier waterways — contains species of fish that have tested positive for mercury and other pollutants called PCBs, synthetic chemicals so toxic federal officials banned them more than three decades ago.

That there are concerns about the water quality of Indiana’s rivers, lakes and streams is not new. But environmentalists are increasingly worried the state has become passive about the problem, even as Indiana’s regulators and industry officials say they’ve made significant progress monitoring and reducing the toxins in Hoosier waterways.

In a draft report about to be submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, state environmental management officials say there are nearly 1,000 stretches of Indiana streams, rivers and lakes where fish have PCBs and mercury in their bodies.

But while other states have created action plans specifically geared toward reducing the contaminants in fish, Indiana hasn’t.

And that concerns environmentalists who say state officials, prompted by a long-standing reluctance to regulate industrial polluters — particularly the coal-fired power plants that dump more than 4,000 pounds of mercury into the environment in a single year — are putting the public at risk.

"We know what the problem is"

At the heart of current debate is the Indiana Department of Environmental Management’s handling of mercury and PCB contamination in a biennial water pollution report soon to be submitted to the EPA.

In the report, state water quality regulators list mercury and PCB fish-tissue contamination as a leading cause of lake and stream impairment, second only to fecal bacteria contamination.

Nevertheless, IDEM placed waterways with mercury and PCB-contaminated fish on a separate, less-urgent action list.

Environmentalists say the decision, in effect, allows the state to delay dealing with toxic fish.

Unacceptable, says Bowden Quinn, conservation program coordinator for the Sierra Club’s Hoosier chapter.

He called it part of a longstanding pattern of inaction among state environmental regulators, who would rather grouse about federal agencies’ lack of funding and guidance instead of actually doing something to get toxins out of the state’s waterways.

For mercury at least, he said, that means forcing one industry to curb how much gets dumped into the environment.

“We know what the problem is,” Quinn said. “It’s coal.”

According to the EPA, coal-burning power plants are the largest human-caused source of mercury in the U.S., accounting for more than 50 percent of all the nation’s airborne mercury emissions.

In Indiana, coal power plants released more than 4,000 pounds of the element into the environment in 2010, the last year numbers were compiled by IDEM. Industrial boilers, foundries and incinerators accounted for 1,000 more pounds that year.

In 2008, Indiana was the seventh-largest source of mercury pollution in the country, according to the EPA’s most recent figures.

Advisories issued

The source of PCB pollution is less easy to pinpoint.

PCBs, which were domestically manufactured to be used in things such as electrical transformers, plastics and floor finishes, were banned in 1979 after scientists linked them to a host of human health problems, including cancer.

PCBs seep into the water supply through such things as leaky transformers, old industrial centers and poorly maintained dump sites. Slow to break down, they linger in the environment for decades.

Mercury and PCBs have at least one thing in common: They wash into waterways and are absorbed by micro-organisms at a bottom of a waterway's food chain.

Those organisms are eventually eaten by fish — and the anglers who catch them.

Small levels of mercury and PCBs build up over time in the bodies of animals and people. The body never flushes them out.

They're particularly worrisome for pregnant women and young children because the toxins damage developing brains and bodies.

The problem is so widespread the Indiana State Department of Health has devoted an entire section of its website to giving anglers guidance about which waterways have contaminated fish and how much they should eat out of each one.

Falon French, outreach associate and policy researcher for the Hoosier Environmental Council, said the problem is that not everyone reads the state's fish-consumption warning signs.

"We hear from a lot of people who fish in the waterways and don't listen to the advisory," she said.

Even so, instilling "fear in people where it isn't warranted" is a bad idea, said Jody Arthur, integrated report coordinator for IDEM's Watershed Assessment and Planning Branch, because eating the occasional fish or taking a weekend swim is largely a safe activity in Indiana's lakes and rivers.

"Work's being done"

State officials say they aren't ignoring the toxins, nor being soft on industries that pollute. They just haven't found a reduction plan that is workable for them. They also say the EPA hasn't yet provided enough guidance and money.

IDEM officials say they've also made significant progress over the years in reducing mercury emissions. A decade ago, the state's polluters were releasing more than 10,000 pounds of mercury, twice the current numbers. And the amounts are expected to drop further by the time new EPAair-quality rules take effect.

A trade group president representing investor-owned electric utilities said the EPA also has recently introduced emission standards that will force companies to put smokestack scrubbers on most of Indiana's coal-burning power plants by 2016. And many small or older power stations will be retired because of the costly upgrades.

"Work's being done," said Stan Pinegar, president of the Indiana Energy Association. "It's not like neither the utilities or IDEM are sitting on their heels here."

The way the contaminants are listed in the EPA report, state officials say, also means Indiana will have to eventually come up with a pollution-reduction plan — just not right now.

Mercury finds its way into water from outside sources, too — power plants and other polluters across the globe, said Bruno Pigott, IDEM's assistant commissioner of water quality. He said more study is needed to determine the sources and what needs to be done.

"It's not a cheap process, and we want it to be scientifically defensible," he said. "We care. We care about getting it right."

The surest way to remove mercury from the environment would be to ban coal-fired power plants outright and switch to cleaner burning fuels such as natural gas — at a cost ratepayers likely wouldn't appreciate, said Thomas P. Simon, a former EPA aquatic

biologist, now a professor at Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs.

Getting the remaining PCBs out of the state's waterways, Simon said, would similarly entail costly dredging, cleaning and "literally moving tons and tons of sediment."

"IDEM gets hammered a lot," Simon said. "Sometimes it's justified. But, overall, I think IDEM has done a good job, given the resources, given the manpower, given the constraints."

IDEM and other states

But leaders in other states have devoted cash and manpower to draft plans geared toward reducing PCBs and mercury in their fish.

A coalition of New England states, as well as Minnesota and New Jersey, already have developed mercury-reduction plans, which set emission standards and timelines for polluters to get their mercury output down, said Peter Cassell, the EPA's Midwest water-quality spokesman.

A number of states, including a coalition along the Delaware River on the East Coast, also have developed similar PCB-reduction plans that put controls on industry wastewater runoff and airborne chemical releases.

Rebecca Walter, mercury program coordinator for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, said her state's reason for coming up with a mercury reduction plan was simple enough: In a tourism-dependent state that touts itself as the "Land of 10,000 lakes," it didn't look good that 820 of them had health advisories warning of mercury-contaminated fish.

As such, she said, Minnesota's coal plants, mines and other industrial facilities were ordered to reduce their mercury output from more than 3,000 pounds in 2005 to 789 pounds by 2025. That's a reduction of nearly 75 percent.

Without a specific pollution plan, Indiana's goals are a lot less lofty.

IDEM officials say the state's mercury emissions are expected to see a 14 percent decrease by 2018, leaving Indiana with 4,300 pounds of the toxic element still emitted into the state's air and water each year.

Even though the EPA gives states leeway to prioritize which contaminants to target, Walter says, it's widely expected the federal government will soon begin forcing states to come up with plans similar to Minnesota's.

"I think the delaying isn't going to help," she said.

An unsafe food source

Natalie Roy, executive director of the Washington, D.C.- based Clean Water Network, said Indiana is clearly trying to "punt" responsibility of cleaning up its waterways.

"That's pathetic," she said.

It's also an example, she said, of a lack of uniform federal standards that would force states to do more to clean their troubled waters.

Roy said even if states do come up with pollution plans, lack of funding and political will means they can languish on shelves for decades.

Because each state is allowed to do things differently, it also makes it difficult to determine which ones are actually making progress — or to compare Indiana with other states.

Roy didn't hold out a lot of hope for Indiana on that front, especially after learning Gov. Mitch Daniels once argued the EPA should be renamed the "Employment Prevention Agency."

"This is about water, for God's sake," she said.

French, of the Hoosier Environmental Council, said cleaning up Indiana's streams and lakes also would help the economy.

She said not only is it fundamental for Indiana residents to have clean streams and rivers because they're the source of the state's drinking water, fishing is a major part of the state's heritage and culture, something that helps drive the tourism industry and spur job growth.

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After a loss off eelgrass and a decline in the oyster population in Great Bay, the state declared the estuary "impaired" in 2009 and later developed a nutrient plan that called for a reduction in nitrogen.

The EPA followed by issuing draft permits to several communities calling for a limit of 3 milligrams per liter, but a coalition of five communities — Exeter, Portsmouth, Newmarket, Dover and Rochester — have argued for phasing in an 8 milligram per liter limit. They say science doesn't support the lower limit and accused the EPA of basing its decisions on fears of being sued by environmental groups.

Rochester Mayor T.J. Jean said complying with the strict limit would cripple his city, which is still paying for a facility it built to comply with EPAimprovements ordered in 1997 and now likely would abandon. At a time when the city already faces significant economic hardships, residents can't afford to see their sewer bills double, he said.

"EPA's indifference to mandating major local expenditures every time a new permit is issued based on the flimsiest of information simply must cease," he said. "We cannot afford such multimillion-dollar guesswork."

Dean Peschel, an environmental consultant for the Great Bay Municipal Coalition, said it would cost the five communities about $588 million to upgrade their plants to meet the proposed nitrogen limits.

Curt Spaulding, the EPA regional administrator, said the agency is aware of the costs and will work with communities on extended compliance schedules. But he also defended his agency's handling of the permitting process and emphasized that the bay's environmental quality is at stake.

"There is still time, though probably not much time, to arrest the decline of Great Bay before it bottoms out," he said.

While the coalition communities have opposed the nitrogen limits and have sued the state over water quality standards, other communities have accepted the proposed limits, including Durham and Newington.

"Newington strongly supports the EPA's efforts to clean up Great Bay," Selectman Rick Stern said. "It's time to stop the political gamesmanship and implement real solutions."

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San Antonio's only defense against this and other pollution reaching its production wells is dilution from the clean water flowing into the aquifer from the rural land west of the city.

To ensure that there is clean water entering the aquifer, the city's Edwards Aquifer Protection Program is about to spend an additional $90 million from a voter-approved one-eighth-cent sales tax to buy conservation easements over the aquifer's recharge zone. So far, the program has spent $135 million from the tax, protecting more than 90,000 acres.

Through the easements, landowners are paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in exchange for giving up their rights to subdivide and develop their land.

In three to four years, the city hopes to protect an additional 90,000 acres.

The easements are slowing the trend of the subdivision of Hill Country ranches. The concept is also starting to reunite under one management plan some of the original ranches that once measured in the tens of thousands of acres but have since been divided into tracts of a few hundred acres.

While the program is one of the most ambitious in the country, it is not known if it will be enough to maintain the Edwards' ability to dilute the expected increase in pollution as San Antonio and surrounding suburban cities expand.

The pollution

Trace levels of tetrachloroethene, a dry-cleaning solvent, are common across North Bexar County. But at monitoring well AY-68-29-418, which taps into the Edwards just north of Blossom Park, southeast of the Loop 1604-U.S. 281 interchange, much higher levels spiked in January to less than half a part per billion shy of violating federal drinking water standards. The Edwards Aquifer Authority started an investigation but has not found the source or cause.

If the concentration increases and reaches one of the San Antonio Water System's production wells, the utility said it would most likely have to shut down that well and increase the flow from others to make up the difference.

The city does not currently have the means to treat polluted water at any of its Edwards wells, according to Scott Halty , director of resource protection at SAWS.

Dry cleaners are not the only source of pollution in the Edwards. From trace levels of pesticides and herbicides showing up in the San Marcos and Comal springs, to chlorinated solvents from a Superfund site in Leon Valley seeping into the groundwater, pollutants from agriculture, industry, sewage systems and lawns are now found in Edwards water.

Some, such as DDT, which was banned in 1972, are most likely left over from decades past. Others, such as the fuel additive and carcinogen benzene, are likely recent additions from spilled fuel or leaking underground storage tanks, according to the EAA.

For that agency, one of the biggest concerns is how much pollution the Edwards can take and still provide water that meets all drinking water standards.

The water under some areas, such as the Superfund site or near an industrial laundry building in Uvalde that burned in 1979, is already unusable and will likely violate drinking water standards for decades to come. But in comparison with the entire aquifer, areas with such problems are a small portion.

Geary Schindel , chief technical officer at the EAA, wonders what would happen if a big-box store burned.

â€œIt has every one of these contaminants in bulk,â€ he said.

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â€œWhat this does is basically make this into a park that will be here forever,â€ he said.

Blanco Creek cuts through these properties, exposing the limestone of the Edwards Aquifer, which looks like sun-baked Swiss cheese.

Springs pop up at the base of the rolling hills, and the creek repeatedly vanishes and reappears as it makes its way south.

Most of the water will enter the aquifer. Some will eventually reappear in household taps across San Antonio. Much of the remainder will flow out of the San Marcos and Comal springs, more than 150 miles to the east.

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Now, further subdividing of their neighbors' ranches will all but stop because those neighbors have all sold conservation easements.

In this round of San Antonio purchasing easements, the neighbors of those neighbors are lining up to see if they can sell their development rights. If San Antonio approves this second batch of easements along Blanco Creek, more than 18,000 acres will be protected.

San Antonio usually pays between $800 and $1,300 an acre for a conservation easement, said Grant Ellis , program director of the aquifer protection program.

â€œWho would have thought 50 years ago that recharge would be valuable?â€ said John McNair , who hopes to sell a conservation easement on his family's 782-acre ranch, which is down the road from the Figgs'.

McNair, 29, hopes to use the money from the conservation easement to start a farming operation, possibly an olive orchard, on his family's land and then start buying back the land sold off by his parents' generation.

â€œThat was what was important to my grandparents, and that is what is important to me,â€ he said. Much of the land along Blanco Creek that the city is looking at used to belong to the McNair family, which has been in the valley for more than five generations.

He and the Figgs share the mentality that property is more important than money.

â€œOur intent is not to leave our kids rich,â€ Figg said. â€œOur goal is to leave them land.â€

Even if his daughters can't hold on to the property or decide to sell, Figg knows that at least the next owner will not be able to subdivide it.

It will allow Figg to sleep a little better at night, but it is still not a guaranteed solution to San Antonio's problem of pollution entering the aquifer.

â€œYou still have the large urban areas, and they will continue to expand,â€ said George Rice, a groundwater hydrologist who served on the EAA board for eight years.

â€œThese programs will decrease the amount of damage we will see in the future, but we are increasing the urbanization. So the absolute amount of damage we will see in the future will increase, it just won't be as bad as it could be.â€

News Headline: Suit to force Everglades cleansing appears near resolution |

Outlet Full Name: Palm Beach Post - Online
News Text: Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

WEST PALM BEACH — More than two decades worth of costly litigation over restoring the Everglades appears to be near an end under a draft plan unveiled at the South Florida Water Management District on Monday.

"This is a monumental effort," said Tom Van Lent, acting CEO of the Everglades Foundation. "What we like about the schedule is that you're going to start now and it's about time."

Executive Director Melissa Meeker explained a series of projects that will cost an estimated $880 million over a dozen years to reach stringent water quality standards.

In conjunction with Meeker's announcement, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection submitted revised permits to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which -- if approved -- would authorize the operation of 57,000 acres of stormwater treatment areas south of Lake Okeechobee.

The district currently manages five stormwater treatment areas, man-made wetlands which use plants to clean and filter water headed to the Everglades. In addition to more stormwater treatment areas, the proposal also calls for adding flow-equalization basins, which would assure a constant flow of water to the stormwater treatment areas.

Some of the new stormwater treatment areas and flow-equalization basins would use land which the district purchased in 2010 from U.S. Sugar and more than 2,000 acres in Mecca Farms that the District hopes to acquire in a land swap with the county.

News Headline: Supporters of ban on treating waste water from fracking collect 700,000 signatures to back bill |

Outlet Full Name: Asbury Park Press - Online
News Text: On The Web: US Environmental Protection Agency Hydraulic Fracturing website: http://epa.gov/hydraulicfracturing/

TRENTON — Petitions containing 700,000 signatures from people who don’t want the waste water from out-of-state hydraulic fracturing treated in New Jersey will be delivered to state lawmakers prior to a Thursday debate about legislation to stop the practice.

Representatives of several environmental and grassroots groups displayed the stacks of 6,500 petitions and letters they intend to deliver to state Senate President Stephen Sweeney, D-Camden, and Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver, D-Essex. The petitions and letters were piled on a table at a press conference at the Statehouse on Monday.

Speakers ranging from a nun to the Delaware River Keeper expressed their concerns about treating waste water from the process to drill for natural gas – also known as fracking – in New Jersey chemical plants and municipal waste water plants. They also cited worries about the potential effect they contend it could have on drinking water, and support of a bill to ban treating that waste water in New Jersey.

“The biggest public concern is clean drinking water,” said Tracy Carluccio, deputy director of the Delaware River Keeper Network.

One bill, S253, sponsored locally by state Sens. Jennifer Beck, R-Monmouth, and Robert M. Gordon, D-Bergen, would prohibit shipping of waste water from hydraulic fracking into the state for treatment and disposal. It is scheduled to be heard by the Senate Environment and Energy Committee on Thursday.

How the treatment of the chemically laden waste water from out-of-state fracking operations would affect their drinking water was the main concern that people voiced to petitioners who went door to door, when asked for their signatures, according to David Pringle, campaign director for the New Jersey Environmental Federation.

“The response is overwhelming. People are horrified at taking another state’s waste,” Pringle said. “They want politicians to make it (a waste water treatment ban) happen.”

Fracking is the process of injecting water and chemicals into shale to free natural gas deposits in them. Proponents of the process said fracking has increased onshore natural gas production by more than 20 percent. They also contend that water makes up 90 percent of the mixture used in fracking, and that chemicals used are similar to household chemicals, according to the website Energy from Shale.org.

Environmental groups contend that the waste water has toxic chemicals, citing a 2004 U.S. Department of Energy study that said wastewater from the fracking process is considered 10 times more toxic than waters produced from offshore drilling processes, citing a 2004 U.S. Department of Energy study.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency hasn’t made recommendations about how that waste water is to be properly cleaned, said Jeff Tittel, New Jersey Sierra Club director.

The concern, he said, is that after treatment of the waste water, which Tittel said contains 600 different chemicals, it is discharged into rivers and streams.

“It will be several years before the U.S. EPA will tell us how to handle it,” said Tittel, who is concerned that local waste water treatment facilities will be tempted to accept and treat it as an additional revenue maker. “New Jersey is an easy target with lots of waste water plants, but none are capable of safely handing that waste water.”

Some of that waste water has been treated in the state in private facilities in Carteret, Kearny and in the Delaware River basin, Tittel said.

News Headline: The week ahead: urban heat and coal mining |

Outlet Full Name: Louisville Courier-Journal - Online
News Text: Coal mining permits and Louisville's seemingly oversized urban heat island take center stage this week.

Meanwhile, Central Kentucky's spring was the warmest on record, according to the National Weather Service. In Louisville, the average temperature March through May was more than six degrees above normal, and nearly three degrees higher than the previous high for the three months, set in 1977.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will hold three hearings over two days, Tuesday and Wednesday, in Frankfort and Pikeville, over its objections to the way Kentucky grants clean-water permits.

The Frankfort hearing is tomorrow and the Sierra Club is planning a major presence.

Also tomorrow, Georgia Tech professor Brian Stone, who is married to a Louisvillian, has two public appearances. Stone's research expertise is urban heat islands and climate change and his findings suggest Louisville's heat island may be among the biggest in the country.

H

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group president representing investor-owned electric utilities said the EPA also has recently introduced emission standards that will force companies to put smokestack scrubbers on most of Indiana's coal-burning power plants by 2016. And many small or older power stations will be retired because of the costly upgrades.

"Work's being done," said Stan Pinegar, president of the Indiana Energy Association. "It's not like neither the utilities or IDEM are sitting on their heels here."

The way the contaminants are listed in the EPA report, state officials say, also means Indiana will have to eventually come up with a pollution-reduction plan — just not right now.

Mercury finds its way into water from outside sources, too — power plants and other polluters across the globe, said Bruno Pigott, IDEM's assistant commissioner of water quality. He said more study is needed to determine the sources and what needs to be done.

"It's not a cheap process, and we want it to be scientifically defensible," he said. "We care. We care about getting it right."

The surest way to remove mercury from the environment would be to ban coal-fired power plants outright and switch to cleaner burning fuels such as natural gas — at a cost ratepayers likely wouldn't appreciate, said Thomas P. Simon, a former EPA aquatic biologist, now a professor at Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs.

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It will allow Figg to sleep a little better at night, but it is still not a guaranteed solution to San Antonio's problem of pollution entering the aquifer.

â€œYou still have the large urban areas, and they will continue to expand,â€ said George Rice, a groundwater hydrologist who served on the EAA board for eight years.

â€œThese programs will decrease the amount of damage we will see in the future, but we are increasing the urbanization. So the absolute amount of damage we will see in the future will increase, it just won't be as bad as it could be.â€

News Headline: Suit to force Everglades cleansing appears near resolution |

Outlet Full Name: Palm Beach Post - Online
News Text: Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

WEST PALM BEACH — More than two decades worth of costly litigation over restoring the Everglades appears to be near an end under a draft plan unveiled at the South Florida Water Management District on Monday.

"This is a monumental effort," said Tom Van Lent, acting CEO of the Everglades Foundation. "What we like about the schedule is that you're going to start now and it's about time."

Executive Director Melissa Meeker explained a series of projects that will cost an estimated $880 million over a dozen years to reach stringent water quality standards.

In conjunction with Meeker's announcement, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection submitted revised permits to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which -- if approved -- would authorize the operation of 57,000 acres of stormwater treatment areas south of Lake Okeechobee.

The district currently manages five stormwater treatment areas, man-made wetlands which use plants to clean and filter water headed to the Everglades. In addition to more stormwater treatment areas, the proposal also calls for adding flow-equalization basins, which would assure a constant flow of water to the stormwater treatment areas.

Some of the new stormwater treatment areas and flow-equalization basins would use land which the district purchased in 2010 from U.S. Sugar and more than 2,000 acres in Mecca Farms that the District hopes to acquire in a land swap with the county.

News Headline: Supporters of ban on treating waste water from fracking collect 700,000 signatures to back bill |

Outlet Full Name: Asbury Park Press - Online
News Text: On The Web: US Environmental Protection Agency Hydraulic Fracturing website: http://epa.gov/hydraulicfracturing/

TRENTON — Petitions containing 700,000 signatures from people who don’t want the waste water from out-of-state hydraulic

fracturing treated in New Jersey will be delivered to state lawmakers prior to a Thursday debate about legislation to stop the practice.

Representatives of several environmental and grassroots groups displayed the stacks of 6,500 petitions and letters they intend to deliver to state Senate President Stephen Sweeney, D-Camden, and Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver, D-Essex. The petitions and letters were piled on a table at a press conference at the Statehouse on Monday.

Speakers ranging from a nun to the Delaware River Keeper expressed their concerns about treating waste water from the process to drill for natural gas – also known as fracking – in New Jersey chemical plants and municipal waste water plants. They also cited worries about the potential effect they contend it could have on drinking water, and support of a bill to ban treating that waste water in New Jersey.

“The biggest public concern is clean drinking water,” said Tracy Carluccio, deputy director of the Delaware River Keeper Network.

One bill, S253, sponsored locally by state Sens. Jennifer Beck, R-Monmouth, and Robert M. Gordon, D-Bergen, would prohibit shipping of waste water from hydraulic fracking into the state for treatment and disposal. It is scheduled to be heard by the Senate Environment and Energy Committee on Thursday.

How the treatment of the chemically laden waste water from out-of-state fracking operations would affect their drinking water was the main concern that people voiced to petitioners who went door to door, when asked for their signatures, according to David Pringle, campaign director for the New Jersey Environmental Federation.

“The response is overwhelming. People are horrified at taking another state’s waste,” Pringle said. “They want politicians to make it (a waste water treatment ban) happen.”

Fracking is the process of injecting water and chemicals into shale to free natural gas deposits in them. Proponents of the process said fracking has increased onshore natural gas production by more than 20 percent. They also contend that water makes up 90 percent of the mixture used in fracking, and that chemicals used are similar to household chemicals, according to the website Energy from Shale.org.

Environmental groups contend that the waste water has toxic chemicals, citing a 2004 U.S. Department of Energy study that said wastewater from the fracking process is considered 10 times more toxic than waters produced from offshore drilling processes, citing a 2004 U.S. Department of Energy study.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency hasn’t made recommendations about how that waste water is to be properly cleaned, said Jeff Tittel, New Jersey Sierra Club director.

The concern, he said, is that after treatment of the waste water, which Tittel said contains 600 different chemicals, it is discharged into rivers and streams.

“It will be several years before the U.S. EPA will tell us how to handle it,” said Tittel, who is concerned that local waste water treatment facilities will be tempted to accept and treat it as an additional revenue maker. “New Jersey is an easy target with lots of waste water plants, but none are capable of safely handing that waste water.”

Some of that waste water has been treated in the state in private facilities in Carteret, Kearny and in the Delaware River basin, Tittel said.

News Headline: The week ahead: urban heat and coal mining |

Outlet Full Name: Louisville Courier-Journal - Online
News Text: Coal mining permits and Louisville's seemingly oversized urban heat island take center stage this week.

Meanwhile, Central Kentucky's spring was the warmest on record, according to the National Weather Service. In Louisville, the average temperature March through May was more than six degrees above normal, and nearly three degrees higher than the previous high for the three months, set in 1977.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will hold three hearings over two days, Tuesday and Wednesday, in Frankfort and Pikeville, over its objections to the way Kentucky grants clean-water permits.

The Frankfort hearing is tomorrow and the Sierra Club is planning a major presence.

Also tomorrow, Georgia Tech professor Brian Stone, who is married to a Louisvillian, has two public appearances. Stone's research expertise is urban heat islands and climate change and his findings suggest Louisville's heat island may be among the biggest in the country.

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